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DR. BELL'S PRIZE DISSERTATION ON DIET.

[Continued from page 256.]

WE apprehend that the point which has been too much overlooked in the researches upon diet, is the greater importance of *quantity*, than kind of aliment. It is on this error, we may premise, the burden of our views and suggestions will be based, having, as we trust, induced our reader to believe that almost all kinds of food are consistent with the health of the human subject, and referred him to sources by which he may convince himself that the longevity of individuals is connected rather with temperance in the amount, than with any peculiarity of his aliment.

Before any inquiry is proceeded in, which may suggest alterations and modifications in the diet of a people, their present actual habits and condition must become preliminary subjects of investigation.

The celebrated French traveiler Volney,* presents the following sketch of the diet of the people of the United States, from observations made during his residence here about forty years since. "Lastly, the government, whilst it directs the attention of the inhabitants of the United States to these objects of domestic concern, should promote their being properly instructed with respect to one of the most essential and most radical causes of all their diseases, I mean their dietetic regimen, which in consequence of their origin, they have derived from the English and Germans. I will venture to say that if a prize were proposed for the scheme of a regimen most calculated to injure the stomach, the teeth, and the health in general, no better could be invented than that of the Americans. In the morning at breakfast, they deluge their stomach with a quart of hot water, impregnated with tea, or slightly so with coffee; that is, mere colored water, and they swallow, almost without chewing, hot bread, half baked, toast soaked in butter, cheese of the fattest kind, slices of salt or hung beef, ham, &c. all which are nearly insoluble. At dinner, they have boiled pastes under the name of puddings, and the fattest are esteemed the most delicious; all their sauces, even for roasted beef, are melted butter;† their turnips and potatoes swim in lard, butter or fat; under the name of pie or pumpkin [pumpkin pie ?] their pastry is nothing but a greasy paste, never sufficiently baked; to digest these viscous substances they take tea almost instantly after dinner, making it so strong that it is absolutely bitter to the taste, in which state it affects the nerves so powerfully, that even the English find it brings on a more

* View of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America. By C. F. Volney.

† This remark of M. Volney reminds us of a later exclamation of a French traveller, "Mon Dieu! what a country! fifty religions and only one sauce——*melted butter!*"

obstinate restlessness than coffee. Supper again introduces salt meats or oysters : as Chastelux says, the whole day passes in heaping indigestions on one another ; and to give tone to the poor relaxed and wearied stomach, they drink Madeira, rum, French brandy, gin or malt spirits, which complete the ruin of the nervous system."

This vivid statement of the Frenchman, though highly colored, from his indignation at our rude, unsophisticated, or, as he would consider it, unscientific cookery, is evidently based on truth and observation, and holds accurate in the main as to the diet of the New England laborer to the present day. Or at least it comprises those peculiarities which so strikingly distinguish him from the inhabitant of the old world. He yet differs from the inhabitant of almost every part of Europe in having an ample supply of animal food twice, and often three times, a day, the quantity of hot drinks that M. Volney asserts, and perhaps their quality, as well as that crude simplicity of cookery which so much excites the Frenchman's wrath. He has also had, since M. Volney's residence here, a still more general and unfortunate abundance of alcoholic drinks, which, it will be readily allowed, have exercised such a devastating influence on human life in the United States, that a large per centage should be allowed on this account, in the comparison of any tables of mortality of this and other countries.

What is the fact in relation to the health of the inhabitant of New England ? This of course forms a question of the highest importance, indeed we may say, of an almost decisive character, as to his diet. We will make a comparison, as extended as may seem necessary for our satisfaction, of the average number of deaths in the population here, and contrast this with that in some other parts of the world, by which it will be evident, as far as conclusions can be deduced from such circumstances, that the habits of the New Englander, as to diet, approximate *nearer* than those of any other people to the standard of correctness. Below we give the minutiæ of detail on which our conclusions are grounded, as we deem it necessary to make out this point specifically ; and though the data on which a judgment in relation to the mortality in New England can be based, are much less accessible than any one who has not made an attempt at an investigation would have supposed, yet enough is here exhibited, it is believed, to render it certain that the annual proportion of deaths is not greater than one in from seventy to eighty individuals.*

* *Table designed to exhibit the annual per centage of mortality in New England :*

Names of Places	No. of years and date	Average of Population	Average of Deaths	Per centage
Alexandria, N. H. - - - -	1. 1822	707	25	1.28
Amherst, " - - - -	30. 1789–1819	1,753	24	1.73
Andover, " - - - -	39. 1782–1821	1,194	11	1.108
Bath, " - - - -	1. 1822	1,498	20	1.74
Boscawen, " - - - -	1. 1823	2,113	38	1.56
*Boston, Mass. - - - - -	19. 1813–1831	45,980	1,111	1.41
Concord, N. H. - - - - -	30. 1792–1821	2,257	27	1.84
Charlestown, Mass. - - - -	1. 1822	6,591	105	1.62
Deerfield, N. H. - - - -	20. 1802–1821	1,950	22	1.88
Dover, " - - - - - -	1. 1822	2,871	54	1.53
" " - - - - - -	1. 1833		59	
Durham, " - - - - -	1. 1822	1,538	38	1.40

* From Dr. Storer's tables in the Medical Magazine.

The following may perhaps be considered as fair a statement as has been computed in regard to the proportionate mortality of different countries. It is abstracted from the report of a very distinguished writer on medical statistics, M. Moreau de Jonnés, which was presented to the French Academy of Medicine at the Séance of July, 1833.

The ratio of mortality is—in Batavia, 1 in 26; Trinidad, 1 in 27; Martinique, 1 in 28; Bombay, 1 in 20; Havana, 1 in 33; Roman

Table continued.

Names of Places	No. of years and date	Average of Population	Average of Deaths	Per centage
Epping, N. H.	10. 1812–1821	1,170	16	1.73
" "	1. 1834	1,158	11	1.105
Epsom, "	8. 1815–1823	1,336	16	1.73
Exeter, "	14. 1810–1823	2,200	27	1.81
Fitzwilliam, "	1. 1822	1,167	22	1.53
Hallowell, Me.	1. 1822	3,000	25	1.116
Haverhill, Mass.	1. 1834		73	
Hanson, "	1. 1822	917	32	1.28
Hartford, Conn.	1. "	4,726	125	1.37
Hopkinton, N. H.	2. 1822–1823	2,437	60	1.40
Kingston, "	1. 1822	847	17	1.49
Jaffrey, "	1. "	1,339	14	1.95
Lynn, Mass.	1. 1834		152	
Milford, N. H.	16. 1806–1821	1,180	13	1.91
Nantucket, Mass.	1 1834		224	
Springfield, N. H.	20. 1802–1822	717	5	1.143
New Haven, Conn.	1. 1822	7,147	144	1.49
New London, N. H.	1. "	924	13	1.71
Northampton, Mass.	1. "	2,854	45	1.63
New Chester, N. H.	1. "	971	12	1.80
New Market, "	1. "	1,083	22	1.49
Swanzey, "	12. 1810–1822	1,558	19	1.82
Warner, "	6. 1817–1822	1,836	25	1.73
Pittsfield, Mass.	1. 1822	2,768	41	1.67
Pelham, N. H.	1. "	1,040	17	1.61
Newburyport, Mass.	1. 1834		112	
Warner, N. H.	6. 1817–1823	2,246	20	1.77
Worcester, Mass.	1. 1823	6,500	87	1.73
Sanbornton, N. H.	33. 1790–1822	2,026	31	1.85
Plymouth, Mass.	1. 1822	4,384	53	1.82
Weare, N. H.	10. 1813–1822	2,752	28	1.98
Portsmouth, N. H.	2. 1822–1823	7,327	110	1.65
Thornton, "	12. 1810–1822	825	6	1.137
Portland, Me.	2. " "	8,531	172	1.50
Salem, Mass.	1. 1822	12,731	225	1.56
Springfield, "	1. "	2,767	43	1.64
Weare, N. H.	1. "	2,781	20	1.139
Derry, "	4. 1830–1834	2,500	25	1.100
Pembroke, "	1. 1822	1,256	11	1.114
Francestown, "	1. "	1,479	8	1.184
Exeter, "	1. 1834	2,800	28	1.100
Sanbornton, "	32. 1790–1823	2,627	31	1.85
Bow, "	10. 1812–1822	935	12	1.77
Bradford, "	9. 1809–1817	1,176	16	1.74
Brookline, "	5. 1808–1812	538	5	1.107
Canterbury, "	12. 1810–1822	1,611	17	1.94
Dublin, "	6. 1816–1822	1,620	15	1.108
Fitzwilliam, "	21. 1802–1822	1,252	14	1.89
Hawke, "	10. 1812–1822	421	5	1.85
Hollis, "	25. 1793–1818	1,642	23	1.71
Lyndeboro' "	10. 1812–1822	1,121	16	1.70
Rye "	37. 1785–1822	1,127	11	1.100

States, 1 in 30 ; Old Venetian territories, 1 in 30 ; Greece and Turkey, 1 in 30 ; the Low Countries, 1 in 39 ; France,* 1 in 39 ; Prussia, 1 in 39 ; Switzerland, 1 in 40 ; Austria, 1 in 40 ; Spain, 1 in 40 ; Portugal, 1 in 40 ; Russia, 1 in 44 ; Poland, 1 in 44 ; Germany, 1 in 45 ; Denmark and Sweden, 1 in 45 ; Norway, 1 in 48 ; Ireland, 1 in 53 ; England, 1 in 58 ; Scotland, 1 in 59.

In several of these countries, which are situated within the torrid zone, ample causes other than those connected with diet, exist for the great ratio of mortality. In others the circumstances of climate, civilization, &c. approximate more or less closely to those of New England. And while in some we must allow a considerable per centage for some peculiarly life-shortening circumstances, such as over-crowded population, burdensome taxation, despotic oppression, &c. *we* have a right to set up the mortifying claim, that no inconsiderable allowance, as before observed, should be made in the New England computation, for the deaths, occasioned over and above what occur in European countries, by the inordinate use of alcoholic drinks, which it is well known are obtained here at an amount of cost, as estimated by the quantum of labor, unexampled and unheard of elsewhere.

Since, then, the average of health and life (inferring the fact of health from the comparative amount of death, a statement probably true in this connection, though doubtless subject to exceptions in those latitudes and localities subject to malarious diseases, intermittents, &c.) is greater in New England than elsewhere, and as the climate, customs of temperance, &c. cannot be considered as peculiarly or even commonly suited to health, it seems but fair to conclude that the habits of the people as to diet are *as near what they should be*, as those of any part of the world.

The consideration of the degree of bodily vigor, of intellectual capacity, of moral and manly feeling, would be a subject of proud recapitulation to the native of New England ; but so little room for doubt exists as to these in the mind of any one acquainted with their past history or present character, that we may without the imputation of vanity say, that nothing unfavorable to his manner of life, as far as diet has any influence on these characteristics, can be deduced from an examination of our population in this point of view.

Though we thus freely and decidedly avow our belief in the general correctness of the diet amongst us, we cannot lose sight of the fact that there are many points in which it may be improved. This is more especially true in regard to the modes of life of our literary and professional

Table continued.

In 20 towns in N. H. and Ms.† in 1806	Pop. 31,328	No. deaths 446	Per centage 1.70
In the State of N. H.‡ by calculation	244,161	3,000	1.81
Towns in Massachusetts§			1.81

* In France, in 1780, the deaths were annually 1 in 30 ; but during the eight years previous to 1824, 1 in 40, or one fourth less.

† Med. and Agric. Register for 1807, page 284. The mortality in the various towns in the table is from various sources entitled to credit—N. H. Hist. Collections, Annals, &c. &c.

‡ "The annual average number of deaths in New Hampshire is estimated at about 3000. This number has been obtained by taking the mean annual average of a number of towns in different parts of the State for a series of years, and making a comparison, by the rule of proportion, between these towns and the other towns in the State."—*N. H. Gazetteer, by Farmer & Moore.*

§ "In several towns on Connecticut River in Massachusetts, the annual average mortality for fifteen years is 1 in 81."—*Dr. Brigham. Influence of Mental Cultivation, page* 95.

men; but as our treatise is confined to the consideration of the diet of our *laboring classes*, the interesting inquiry into the changes demanded for the former cannot be pursued.

Since, then, no radical changes are deemed essential or expedient, an examination into the principal errors in the actual diet of the New England laborer, will determine an answer to the original interrogation propounded. These errors are:

1. Too great a proportion of animal food. Although having at the commencement of our undertaking arrived at the conclusion that the use of animal food, in its prepared state, as employed by civilized man, was neither contra-indicated by his anatomical structure, nor by the evidence of experience, we are still no less willing to admit that one of the most crying abuses in our system of diet is the over-abundant employment of flesh. We place this error in the first rank, not because we are inclined to make that strict line of demarcation between animal and vegetable substances which recent *ultraism* in dietetics would fain prescribe. We are persuaded that too much stress has been put on the abstract consideration of food, as animal, or vegetable; the former in itself being looked upon as positively deleterious, and not as being the foundation of over-eating, that is, the supplying the system with too great and too rapid accessions of nutritive material. Some of the enthusiasts on this subject seem, both in theory and practice, not so much to have guarded against undue repletion generally, as to have fulminated their cautions and warnings against this one prominent cause of gluttony; they have freely employed and allowed butter, cream, cheese, eggs, sugar, &c. and other articles of aliment the most highly concentrated in nutritive properties of any we are acquainted with, whilst the smallest quantities of the plainest cooked animal food have been proscribed, and that on reasoning hardly more substantiable than the dogmas of oriental religion, or the dreaming fantasies of Rousseau.

The views which many popular writers on this subject have thrown out in relation to the digestion of animal food, are exceedingly loose and unphilosophical. They speak of it as being so highly *animalized*, that is, so nearly approximating in its composition to the human body, that by implication they must be understood to mean that it is excepted from the ordinary changes of alimentary matter in the digestive organs, and is received into and becomes part of the economy by direct absorption, or by some more summary and expeditious process than that of being resolved and re-composed. Animal and vegetable substances, by the analyses of chemistry, are reducible into the same ultimate elements, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, and, in most animal and a few vegetable matters, azote. The better opinion of modern physiologists is, that there is no one constant principle of aliments which alone is capable of assimilation. Haller, for example, thought this principle to be jelly; Cullen that it was oil and sugar, or a combination of these; Fordyce that it was the mucilaginous portions; Richerand that it was always gum, sugar, or mucilage. It seems, however, to be sufficiently demonstrated that in the elaboration and formation of chyle, the food is resolved into its original elements, and by vital affinities not well understood, re-composed into the organic structure. Hence whatever is, from its chemical composition and mechanical

structure, susceptible of being decomposed by the organs of digestion, is capable of being applied to the uses of the system. The resistance which different substances offer to this decomposing process forms their degree of digestibility; their nutritiveness, supposing entire digestion is effected, will depend upon the difference of their elementary composition, and can be deduced only from experience, and not, as yet, from chemistry.* Animal food, it would appear, directly from the experiments of Dr. Beaumont, as well as presumptively from the observations of former writers, is carried through the processes of digestion in a much shorter space of time than other substances, and the resulting chyle added to the circulatory system with great rapidity. See experiment 26, of Dr. Beaumont,† in illustration of this fact. The residuum left undigested of animal food is comparatively inconsiderable. Hence after the ingestion of this, the quantity of blood is augmented very considerably and very rapidly. This occasions a change in the equilibrium of the circulation, far beyond what would result from the more gradual addition of supplies to the circulating fluids. In the latter case, during the time the chyle was being poured

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* It will be taken for granted that the ordinary views of the processes of assimilation are substantially correct, or at least more true than false, as well as known to our reader; that although there may be many errors, absurdities and inconsistencies in the accounts of this function by our best physiologists, still we have the basis of fact for the great outlines of a system of digestion through the agency of a *gastric juice*. The experiments of Spallanzani, of Tiedeman and Gmelin, of Leuret and Lassaigne, seem to demonstrate the existence and agency of such a fluid.

If there are, and no doubt there must be, many of our American medical men, whose faith in the common system of digestion has been shaken by the talented, ingenious and philosophical treatise of Prof. Smith, of Baltimore, on Digestion [Physiological Essay on Digestion, by N. R. Smith, M.D. New York, 1826], or if there are any who have embraced the later views of a Philadelphia professor [Principles of Medicine, by Samuel Jackson, M.D. &c. Philadelphia, 1833], (which latter supposition is hardly possible, as his ideas are veiled in the Cimmerian darkness of incomprehensible verbosity), the recently published labors of an American surgeon must go far to produce a re-conversion to the olden doctrine.

We allude here to the "Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion, by Wm. Beaumont, M.D. Surgeon in the U. S. Army," a work composed under circumstances which gave the writer a deeper entrance into the very penetralia of Nature's temple, than has been before accorded to any individual. Although evidently not pursued with that systematic and scientific ingenuity which have characterized the investigations of the French physiologists, still these experiments have a degree of precision in detail, a *vraisemblance*, which, wherever they go, or however long they may exist, will never lose their value, as *facts*. (Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat. *Cicero, de Natura Deorum.*) The author is evidently unaccustomed to experiment for the purpose of book-making, or to warp the results to suit a peculiar theory or a new hypothesis. We shall draw considerably on his volume, for illustrations on what we deem the most important points of a code of dietetics. Dr. Beaumont's now well-known experiments were made on a young Canadian named St. Martin, in whom was a fistulous opening into the stomach in consequence of a gunshot wound. This opening was provided by an expedient of nature with a sort of valve, preventing the escape of the gastric contents and placing the organ in nearly its original state, but capable of being pushed aside in order to admit substances to be experimented upon. The digestion of the individual, and consequently his health, strength, and capacity for labor, &c. were in a natural state.

This case, so interesting and important, is in some respects not unique. For a similar example of fistulous opening into the stomach, the medical reader is referred to the Elemens de Physiologie of Richerand, Tom. I. p. 202. The same case is also recited in the Dict. des Sciences Med. Art. Digestion. The experiments in this instance were comparatively imperfect and unimportant, on account of the broken down state of the patient's health and constitution.

† Op. infra Citato. p. 143.

into the blood, a portion of that fluid would be expended upon the various offices of the system, and the vessels become accommodated to their increased fulness. Nature in the human system abhors sudden changes as much, in truth, as the ancient natural philosophers fancied she did a vacuum. After a full meal of animal food, the action of the heart is soon materially increased, the pulse becoming fuller and stronger; the face is flushed; the brain is oppressed, as is evident from the drowsiness, and the indisposition for mental exertion or bodily exercise; in short, a general disturbance of the constitutional powers is manifested. This excitement has been described by Dr. Paris, as "the digestive fever."

After the lapse of a few hours, in which nature has been busily at work to disburden herself of the load thus cast upon her, through the medium of discharging a portion from the various emunctories, and, as it were, waste-gates and safety-valves, of the system, and fitting the remainder for the various uses of the economy by the agency of the pulmonary, and perhaps other organs, the system arrives at its original level, till it is again called upon to be over-stimulated by too much and too nutrient diet. The fluctuation produced by a quantity of food sufficient only to repair the waste of the system, is something, but not of that overwhelming, destructive character, which gluttony produces; keeping up a constant warfare between the conservative power of the constitution and the intrusion of over-supplies. The springs of life are urged on too fast, by over-stimulation from this cause, in a manner similar or rather analogous to the undue excitement produced by alcoholic stimuli. The excitability of the system is worn out and exhausted.

The effect of a repetition of the excitement of too much nutriment added to the system, is ultimately to give too great a preponderance to the sanguiferous function. Although the plethoric habit of body is to be, and generally amongst the laborers in New England is avoided by their great amount of bodily exercise, the surplus nutriment is disposed of, in a great portion, through organs of great delicacy and importance, the lungs and skin. These are thus called on to execute habitually more than they can perform, without rendering any sudden derangement or stop of their functions a serious interference with the healthy state of the individual. Have we not in this suggestion, conjoined with the changing character of our climate, a key to the prevailing habitudes of morbid action amongst our population? Experience shows that a great proportion of the diseases of New England are diseases of excited action, requiring the employment of the lancet and other depleting measures to an extent unknown and unparalleled in other countries.* We may account in part for this notorious fact, by considerations of climate, but the constitutional peculiarity or temperament must be mainly ascribed to an over-nutritive and over-stimulating diet. Some further observations on the unnaturally augmented action of the cutaneous and pulmonary transpiratory functions will be added, when considering the influences of hot fluids on the health.

* What would a country practitioner in New England (of which unfortunate fraternity, the writer (horresco referens) acknowledges himself to be one) think of treating a pleurisy, or enteritis, or any other acute inflammatory disease, after the mild plan of ptisans, antimonials, &c. laid down in our medical journals, as practised in the French and other European hospitals!

To what extent a reduction in the quantity of animal food should be made, we believe it is impossible to say with precision; to lay down any general rule which will meet individual application. The grand principle is, that the quantity of nutritive aliment should be in proportion to the expenditure of the energies of the system by active exertion of body, having in view individual temperament, habits, &c.

This, like all other points of diet, can be solved only by experience. The writer has found, on pretty extended investigation into the habits of the first settlers of the part of the country where he resides, who were pre-eminent for health, longevity and bodily strength (so much so, that a distinguished collector of statistical facts has drawn most of his illustrations and premises on longevity from them*), that a much less amount of animal food was formerly employed than at the present day. They restricted themselves to two meals, of which meat was a part, per day, the third, or supper, being simply of bread and milk, *hasty-pudding*, &c. almost universally.

The objection which recent writers and lecturers, who advocate the entire disuse of animal food, make to it on account of its being aliment in a too concentrated state, that is, having too small a proportion of indigestible parts, deserves consideration. This objection is generally considered as sustained by the experiments of Magendie and other physiologists, on animals. Dogs, rabbits, &c. fed on oil, sugar, &c. which are almost entirely convertible into chyle, became diseased and died in the course of a few weeks. His conclusion at first was that animal life could not be sustained without the food contained a proportion of azote, which, in the highly nutritive substances he experimented with, was wanting. Subsequent experiments convinced him that his first conclusions were not well grounded, and "induced him," remarks Prof. Dunglison, "to conclude, as Dr. Bostock and Sir Charles Bell have since done, without being aware apparently of Magendie's observations, that variety and multiplicity of articles of food constitute an important hygienic rule." "This," Magendie adds, "is indicated to us by our instincts, as well as by the changes that wait upon the seasons, as regards the nature and kind of alimentary substances."

That the bulk of food, or rather its admixture with indigestible substances, is an important circumstance to a healthful digestion, is a fact long since known and freely admitted. Even the personal experience of the savage Esquimaux has taught him to mix his train oil with saw-dust. The necessity of bulky food is perhaps adequately explained on the view of the influences produced by it on the constitution, when its nutritive proceeds are too rapidly turned into the circulation;—perhaps something, too, may be allowed for the effects produced by the stimulus of distension, which the stomach, like the other hollow viscera, may require for the due performance of its office. At all events, this objection of too great concentratedness goes only to establish, what at the present day no one would be found to advocate, the inexpediency of an exclusively animal diet.

[To be continued.]

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* Worcester. Annals of the American Academy.

MIDWIFERY.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—In the twelfth volume of your Journal, page 248, is a communication by A. P. Fuller, M.D. in which he makes some remarks on the speedy and forcible removal of the placenta. Dr. Fuller says, "Since that time (alluding to his first case), I have usually made it my practice to remove the placenta very soon after the birth of the child, by force if necessary."

This all may be right, if rightly understood; yet if intended to alter the general practice as laid down by modern systematic writers, I think it may mislead the younger part of the profession. An experience of nearly thirty years has led me to the conclusion that force, or haste, are *seldom* necessary for the delivery of the child or placenta; but I know that at times it may be otherwise. I have two cases to present, the treatment of which was as different as their results were unlike.

In 1808, I was called to visit Mrs. C. in a neighboring town, who had been three days in labor with her first child. Four respectable physicians had been in attendance for more than three days, and considered her case nearly hopeless; all except one had left. On examination, the presentation was found natural, the parturient effort frequent and powerful; the parts fully dilated, not rigid. Repeated trial of the forceps had been made, the head had been opened, and there was no apparent good reason why a speedy and safe delivery could not be effected.

After various trials, with much difficulty I succeeded in delivering the head in the absence of all natural pain. After a short respite, I endeavored, during the pain, to bring forward the body, but in vain. My utmost effort of strength, well seated, and my knees resting against the bedstead, was not sufficient to effect a delivery. Assisted by Dr. F. in the absence of pain I at length succeeded in delivering the child. Waiting a short time, and there being no prospect of obtaining the placenta, all pain having ceased, I easily introduced my hand into the uterus, where I found an hour-glass contraction so small and firm that with difficulty one finger could be pressed through by the side of the cord. Never having met with the like before, I withdrew my hand, and in consultation with Dr. F., who was an able and experienced practitioner, it was agreed that he should, without delay, attempt the removal of the placenta by art. He made the trial, and by patient effort of about twenty minutes succeeded in bringing away the placenta entire. It had no adhesion, but was forcibly retained, as was the child, by the hour-glass contraction. No hemorrhage ensued, although the uterus did not now contract very readily or completely.

Our patient having suffered so much and so long, was now animated and cheerful; she took a little gruel, called for her pinch of snuff, and used it. In about half an hour from this time, at her earnest solicitation, she was removed into an easy chair, partially elevated. While here, and we congratulating ourselves on her happy prospects, in about fifteen minutes a change came over her countenance, spasm ensued, a general convulsion followed, and death immediately closed the sad scene.

Remarks.—Two essential errors at least were committed in managing the foregoing case after the patient came under my care; first, the *early* forcible removal of the placenta, when there was no hemorrhage; secondly, the placing her in a posture approaching to erect. Time, external pressure, friction, &c. ought to have been the resort for the removal of the placenta; this having failed, the forcible removal *possibly* might have become advisable. When the hand was in the uterus for the removal, internal irritation, with external pressure of the fundus, should have been tried to produce a more equal contraction, as this did not fully take place.

I am one of those heterodox practitioners (if you please to call me so), who do not believe that a retained placenta *necessarily* produces any dangerous or deleterious consequences. I would always wish its speedy exit, and where flooding ensued and continued, should endeavor its removal by force, where other rational means failed. When a woman has been long in labor, much exhausted by pain and irritation, I believe she will with much less hazard of life sustain the loss of a moderate portion of blood subsequent to the delivery of the child, than the immediate, and many times difficult and painful introduction of the hand and forcible removal of the placenta.

The following is a case in point. Mrs. F——, aged thirty years, after having been in travail sixty hours with her first confinement, was delivered of a living child. Little loss of blood followed. She was much exhausted. I made the usual effort to remove the placenta, but was not successful; pressure, friction, ergot, &c. all failed; the umbilical cord was very small and tender, the os uteri contracted.

After continuing my efforts for about six hours, there being no parturient action to aid me, I resolved to leave her and trust the event to nature. Her attendants were at once alarmed, supposing that if so left, mortification would necessarily follow. Mrs. F., worn out with pain and completely exhausted, was well satisfied with my reasoning and my determination, being willing to hazard all for the sake of being let alone.

I left her on Saturday evening, about nine hours after the birth of the child, with directions how to proceed if hemorrhage ensued, and to give me early notice. No unusual symptoms or trouble occurred; there was very little loss of blood, and on Wednesday following, at 2 o'clock, P. M. being four days and two hours from the birth of the child, while evacuating urine the placenta came away, without any assistance. She had a good recovery, and has since borne several children.

St. Johnsbury, Vt. 1835. CALVIN JEWETT, M.D.

EQUILIBRIUM OF THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ORGANS.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—I have thought much of the necessity of certain due proportions between the different parts of the human system, in order to the perfection of *health* and mental manifestation. This pre-supposes the necessity of what may be aptly termed an equilibrium of the mental and bodily

organs. Precocity is one of the disordered states of the system in which this equilibrium is destroyed by the too great size and activity of the brain.

Tendencies to this are sometimes hereditary. Where both parents are highly intellectual, with large heads and nervous temperaments, it is not uncommon for their children to be precocious. The nervous system predominates greatly in early life. The head is then much larger in proportion to the body than it is at a later period. The brain is very soft, and even almost liquid, during childhood, and is largely supplied with blood and grows with great rapidity. This growth may be rapidly and diseasedly increased by great excitement of the brain, as in violently exciting the intellectual or affective faculties. It generally so happens that the children of educated parents are most liable to this sudden growth, both from tendency to excitement, and a course of *training* and attention which produces great excitement. The blood is thrown to the head with increased velocity, and the size of the brain is increased just as is the size of the hand that is constantly used. This is followed by precocity. The child manifests wonderful talents for its age, and its parents and all the family friends are emulous to learn it as fast as possible. Soon the brain that is so constantly excited becomes inflamed and diseased, and the child is, like the fruit that is early ripe, soon destined to return to its elements. I have seen many children of this description who have died, some at two, some five, some ten, and some twelve years of age.

The doctrines of phrenology (that abused science), when properly understood, will enable parents to discover early tendencies to précocity, and enable them to adopt such a course as is best calculated to counteract it.

About a year since a child was brought to me by its mother, that I might remark upon its physiological appearance. The little girl was then nine years of age. Its head was remarkably large, with a small face and an exceedingly delicate nervous frame. When spoken to, it became tremulous, and its cerebral action seemed to shake the whole system. The parents are very intellectual, and move in the first circles, and seem excessively fond of their children. The father afterwards remarked to me, that all he lived for was his children, and that he thought he understood how to manage them pretty well. I happened to know one or two items of this management. The child I am speaking of had learned Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and some of the modern languages—had attended to philosophy in several of its branches, and to music, and in every way had been allowed to go on with her studies to any extent she pleased. The night before I saw her, the mother had taken her to the theatre, and the child had been so much excited by it, that it could not sleep. How long will that little feeble frame support such a brain? It does not require less than one-third of all the blood of the system to sustain it. The child yet lives; and long may it live, is not only the parents', but my earnest prayer. But prayers will not be answered, when we go on in violation of natural law. Suppose such a child should take a cold and a fever should follow, how slight would be its chance of recovery!

I mention this as but a single case out of many. I was in the study

of an artist in one of our cities a short time since, and saw the pictures of no less than five precocious children, all taken within the two preceding months, and after death! To see an individual in middle life, who was precocious when a child, would be one of the most rare occurrences in my life. But precocious *children* are to be seen daily. Why will not parents study the natural laws? Let them *study* Dr. Combe's little work on the Principles of Physiology applied to the Preservation of Health and the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education. I say study—mere casual reading should not suffice. It is one of Harper's Family Library, and costs but fifty cents. It should lay on the mantlepiece or the centre table, to be taken up daily and digested by piecemeal. Dr. Brigham's little work on the Influence of Mental Cultivation upon Health, is also a valuable book, and not liable to the objections which we are constrained to make against his late work, "The Influences of Religion upon Health." J.

Boston, November, 1835.

BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

BOSTON, DECEMBER 2, 1835.

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK.

In the November number of the U. S. Medical and Surgical Journal, is a condensed history of the Medical Society of the great State of New York, which cannot be otherwise regarded by the profession than an important document. To us, who have no personal interest in the constitution or operative By-Laws of this institution, a journal of the business transactions of a neighboring Society, whose protecting influence is felt in every city and town where its jurisdiction is extended, becomes a valuable book of reference. Without just such a bird's-eye view as the one before us, the origin and progress of the Society would soon become obscured by the increase of business and the accession of a multitude of members, distributed widely over a large extent of country.

It is a prodigious fault in this country, that incorporated literary societies are disposed to show the world no favors—and in looking back upon the doings of many new fledged institutions that promised extensive benefit to mankind, nothing has been heard from them since the day of their incorporation, worth recounting. Instead of regularly and systematically publishing, minutely, a journal of each sitting, which by courtesy, at least, they are bound to do, the most that the vulgar eye ever discovers is the mere evidence, about once a year, that an annual meeting is notified in some weekly paper.

Our medical societies, above all others, have been wofully negligent in exhibiting the results of conclave labors. Regularly drawn up papers, squared, planed and varnished for a great occasion, march into the pages of a blue, board-bound, slovenly-stitched volume, occasionally—and down they go into the dust, for the future excavation of posterity; but so little is known of what is done, and how, that a revolution is demanded. Though an age of anti-ism, medical men, of all others, should have nothing hid-

den. We like to know who was chairman, who were present, what was said, who were honored, and who deserved better treatment than they found. This is the true English, French and German mode of conducting public medical assemblies; and they flourish, because every person of character, even though without the pale of the profession, is made acquainted with the learning, eloquence, ingenuity and respectability manifested in the minute details which are presented to the people, through the press. Contrast with this, the mode pursued in some of the States. A printer might solicit permission to publish the ordinary records of an evening meeting of a score of the most learned savans in the Union, till his hair became frosted by age, without succeeding—and simply because a false estimate is placed on their value.

The journal of the Medical Society of New York is precisely the kind of paper that every similar association should furnish to its members. Indeed, as a whole, it is admirable. You may know by it the week, and almost hour, each event occurred, from the day of its incorporation to the present time. Instead, however, of imposing the trouble upon the editor of the Journal to follow out the records in detail, a pamphlet, published annually, at the Society's expense, precisely like the one before us, would have met the entire approbation, doubtless, of all the physicians and surgeons belonging to the Society. As it is, they get it for almost nothing—without thanking the gentleman for his pains.

It is desirable that the Medical Society of this Commonwealth should publish its business journal, from the books, minutely. It would have a wonderfully spirit-stirring effect. Beside very much obliging Fellows who cannot always be present, gentlemen abroad would probably derive pleasure and satisfaction from it.

For ourselves, we feel under personal obligation to the editor of the Journal referred to, for the good example he has set forth for all other medical societies.

THE ABRACADABRA OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Some weeks ago, we gave a passing notice of a book, published in New York, entitled "Remarks on the Abracadabra of the nineteenth Century; or on Dr. Samuel Hahnemann's Homœopathic Medicine, with particular reference to Dr. Constantine Hering's Concise View of the Rise and Progress of Homœopathic Medicine, by William Leo-Wolf, M.D." with a full intention of entering more into particulars at some convenient day. After another examination of the work, we are free to say that much curious biographical knowledge, touching the king of quacks, Hahnemann, may be found in it, which does not exist in any other English book, in connection with other miscellaneous matter, both new and curious to an American reader. There is, however, a glaring fault, pervading the whole, which could not have been anticipated in the critical writings of a German philosopher. We allude to the entire want of method in the arrangement of the subjects presented to the public. There is neither, strictly speaking, a beginning or an end; the author never rested till he had actually produced two hundred and seventy-two closely printed octavo pages, beside marginal notes of frightful dimensions. A sub-division into chapters, at least, and a copious index, would have obliged the whole fraternity of medicine.

With regard to the merits of the performance, it is still difficult to de-

cide. A more popular form would have given it a more extensive circulation, and it would unquestionably then have fallen into the hands of those who are exclusively the dupes of charlatanical knaves. As it is, none but physicians would think of taking it in hand, and a few, only, of that class, we opine, will ever be at the trouble of giving it a thorough perusal. To countervail the determined force of empiricism, acting in full vigor in these devoted States (the strong hold of every adventurer in nostrums), the press should aim to guide the ignorant. Physicians and surgeons require nothing to keep alive a deep-rooted sense of indignation towards the lawless wretches who thrive just in proportion to the havoc they make with the health and purses of their infatuated followers. We perceive that disciples of Hahnemann have opened their batteries here, which nothing short of intelligence can oppose. Dr. Wolf intended a fatal blow to their success, but, to our infinite regret, has entirely failed. Were he to compress to half the present size, and then make the remainder intelligible to common understandings, his ostensible object would speedily be obtained.

BURIAL OF THE DEAD IN CITIES.

For successive years, we have endeavored to impress upon the public mind the extreme hazard of suffering the dead to accumulate in the various cemeteries and tombs of this densely inhabited city. Not wishing to urge the mere declaration of an individual opinion, that the practice was one fraught with future danger to the health of the inhabitants, authentic cases have been cited from time to time, which have proved, beyond the shadow of doubt, that the thousands of bodies in various stages of animal decomposition, in Boston, must have a decidedly deteriorating effect on the air that is breathed and the water that is drunken by the people. No perceptible evil growing out of this reprehensible custom, has yet been discovered :—that is, a pestilence has not been generated in the damp, gloomy receptacles of the decaying dead, under the churches ; but in process of time the poisonous vapors will escape, charged with a message of death to whoever happens within the sphere of their noxious influence.

We are not ignorant of the ingenious arguments advanced in favor of the continuance of the nuisance ;—but all the facts, in the history of old European cities, establish, incontrovertibly, the position, that human life must be abridged by inhaling the contaminated atmosphere of a region in which putrid animal remains are continually accumulating. Though nature endeavors, by unobserved processes, to preserve the balance of power in favor of the living, in a compact city, she cannot always compete with civilized man, who gathers into frightful masses the changing bodies of thousands upon thousands—faster than the mephitic gases can be wafted from the horrible recesses in which they are elaborated.

In the city of Boston, the evil day is coming when the short-sighted policy of our forefathers will be felt in this respect, in all its destructive character and tendencies. But the wonder is this,—why are burials still permitted within the precincts of the old city ? Look at the churches, and those, too, most centrally located, in whose arched vaults are progressively mouldering into dust, a larger multitude than crowd the aisles above—who are unconscious of the gloomy spectacle beneath their feet, or of the tainted air which they inhale.

No burials should hereafter be permitted within the city ; and were a

health police regulation of this kind rigidly enforced henceforward, a hundred years would be none too long a period for purifying the places where so many bodies have joined their mother earth. Though no expectations are entertained of inducing the municipal authorities, by these remarks, to interdict interments within the limits of Boston, we cannot refrain from giving a warning voice—with a hope that some prospective good may result from it.

Every city in the United States, unfortunately, has tolerated the same bad custom; but in none of them are the citizens so circumscribed and compact, as in Boston—we repeat it, therefore, that unless the whole system is abandoned, and the churches are freed from the corruption that now reigns within their hallowed walls, there is reason to fear that a future generation will suffer by our neglect.

MEDICAL COMMENCEMENT.

GRADUATES of the Berkshire Medical Institution will receive their diplomas this day. We understand there are thirty-two candidates. The term has been one of unusual interest. The lectures of Dr. Bartlett on Pathological Anatomy are well spoken of by the students. He is a man of sterling acquirements, whose usefulness in the chair he at present occupies, promises well for the future reputation of the School. Dr. Childs, always fortunate in teaching the Theory and Practice of Medicine, has given peculiar satisfaction to a large and intelligent class of students. We are also happy to learn that Mr. Frizzle, the Demonstrator of Anatomy, has made himself exceedingly useful to those engaged in the dissecting room. Dr. Parker will immediately join the class at Geneva, where he holds the professorship of Anatomy and Physiology.

Treatise on Smallpox.—A new edition of our friend Dr. Fisher's beautifully executed illustrations of the smallpox and varioloid, is on sale at the principal bookstores. We consider it in the light of an indispensable book of reference, by which the physician may at once detect those diseases. Objections have been made to the price, but unjustly. The cost of engraving the plates, alone, was not far from eight hundred dollars. When to this, is added the expense of coloring them, and printing the text, no man in his senses could reasonably object to paying ten dollars for the best treatise in our language.

Lectures on the Brain.—We learn that the lectures on the brain of man and other animals, before the Phrenological Society, were well received. Some of the drawings used in the demonstrations were excellent, on account of their great size—enabling those in the farthest part of the hall to see each part distinctly. The Society's collection of plaster casts, now lodged in a basement room of the Masonic Temple, is well worthy the especial visitation of gentlemen visiting the city. No other museum is thought to compare with it in this country.

Feuds among Physicians.—A gentleman in a country town, where there are five practitioners of medicine, no two of whom can speak civilly together, desires to know how one hundred can live in Boston without

quarreling ? Answer. In the first place, every physician in the city is considered a gentleman, till he shows himself to be otherwise. Secondly, each one devotes himself exclusively to his own individual business. Thirdly, they have nothing to quarrel about.

Massachusetts General Hospital.—There were two important operations at the Hospital on Saturday last. One was for an aneurism of the brachial artery of the right arm. The patient was a stout, hale man, of about 40, who made no complaint whatever. We hear he is doing well. Dr. Hayward operated.

The second was in consequence of a dreadful compound fracture of the right thigh bone and knee, in a boy, not far from twelve years old, who was accidentally run over a few days before by a fire engine. The wound was enlarged, through which the condyle previously protruded, and the bone sawed off about two inches and a half above the joint—thus completely taking away the upper half of the articulation. We hope to be furnished with a history of this interesting case to its final termination. Dr. Warren was the operator.

Smallpox.—One case has occurred, recently, at Woonsocket Falls, R. I. A brisk vaccination was forthwith commenced by the physicians of the place, who have doubtless circumscribed the disease, ere this.

Whole number of deaths in Boston for the week ending Nov. 28, 46. Males, 21—Females, 25.

Of measles, 10—typhous fever, 3—bowel complaint, 2—lung fever, 2—scarlet fever, 1—infantile, 4—consumption, 7—dropsy on the brain, 2—unknown, 1—inflammation of the bowels, 1—croup, 2—convulsions, 1—inflammation on the lungs, 1—dropsy, 1—drowned, 2—hooping cough, 1—burn, 1—bleeding at the lungs, 1—intemperance, 1—stoppage in the bowels, 1.

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